

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY D/PW:FASIEVERTS:JS

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L - MR. ALDRICH S/S:GSSPRINGSTEEN

EA/VN - MR. WENZEL

EA - MR. STEARNS

S/R - MR. KELLOGG

EA/LC - MR. RIVES

AID/SA - MR. GOODWIN

AID/SA - MR. ZIMMERLY

IO/UNP - MR. HEWITT

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAIGON PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 125082

EXDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PARMS, PFOR, ICRC, VN, VS

SUBJECT: ICRC WEAPONS CONFERENCE AND IOG GRANT

REFS : A) SAIGON 7149, 7294, 7591; B) USUN 2078;
C) STATE 119953; D) STATE 110636; E) GENEVA 3628;
F) PHNOM PENH 6586 (NOTAL); G) SAIGON 5251;
H) VIENTIANE 2679 (NOTAL)

1. WE HAVE GIVEN SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO YOUR RECOMMENDATION THAT WE CONSIDER WITHDRAWING THE FURTHER \$2 MILLION GRANT TO THE IOG IN VIEW OF ICRC'S ACTION IN REOPENING QUESTION OF PRG INVITATION TO WEAPONS CONFERENCE. WHILE WE AGREE ICRC SHOULD UNDERSTAND THE STRENGTH OF OUR DISAGREEMENT WITH AND RESENTMENT AT THEIR PROCEDURE ON THIS ISSUE, WE DO NOT BELIEVE WITHDRAWAL OF ADDITION FUNDING FROM IOG -- WITH OR WITHOUT EXPLANATION -- WOULD BE AN
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APPROPRIATE OR EFFECTIVE WAY TO ACCOMPLISH THIS.

2. USG DECISION TO PROCEED WITH FURTHER FUNDING FOR IOG WAS NOT TAKEN LIGHTLY AND REFLECTS OUR JUDGEMENT THAT IOG IS

QUALIFIED AND WILLING TO CONTINUE TO CARRY OUT IMPORTANT HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMS IN INDOCHINA, PARTICULARLY IN CAMBODIA, WHERE BULK OF ITS FUNDS (INCLUDING OURS) ARE GOING -- PRIMARILY FOR REFUGEE RELIEF. THERE ARE OVER ONE MILLION REFUGEES IN GOVERNMENT AREAS ALONE IN CAMBODIA, AND IOG IS CONDUCTING A WELL-FUNCTIONING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR THEM -- IN A SITUATION IN WHICH THE HOST GOVERNMENT IS VIRTUALLY INCAPABLE OF HELPING AND THE USG IS BLOCKED BY CONGRESSIONAL RESTRICTIONS FROM MANNING AN EFFECTIVE PROGRAM OF ITS OWN. ALTHOUGH IOG'S PROGRAMS OPERATE ON A SMALLER SCALE IN LAOS AND SOUTH VIETNAM, WE UNDERSTAND THESE PROGRAMS HAVE ALSO FUNCTIONED EFFECTIVELY, IN COOPERATION WITH HOST RED CROSS SOCIETIES. ON BASIS EMBASSY COMMENTS (REFS F, G AND H) AND OTHER REPORTS, DEPARTMENT AND AID/W BELIEVE FURTHER COMMITMENT OF \$2 MILLION FOR IOG PROGRAMS IN INDOCHINA IS FULLY JUSTIFIED.

3. AS YOU KNOW IOG IS NOT SIMPLY AN EXTENSION OF ICRC BUT CONTAINS OTHER IMPORTANT ELEMENTS FROM LEAGUE OF RED CROSS SOCIETIES AND NATIONAL SOCIETIES. MANY KEY IOG STAFF HAVE BEEN NON-ICRC -- INCLUDING STROH (SWEDEN) AND GILL (UK). ICRC IS NOT IN FACT ESPECIALLY FOND OF IOG STRUCTURE, SINCE IT GIVES THESE OTHER PARTS OF THE RED CROSS COMMUNITY A ROLE IN WHAT ICRC PREFERS TO REGARD AS ITS TRADITIONAL DOMAIN. DEPTOFFS GAINED IMPRESSION IN GENEVA THAT ICRC WOULD JUST AS SOON HAVE IOG PHASED OUT OF EXISTENCE, AND INCREASING ICRC AUTHORITY OVER IOG (REPORTED REF E) IN FACT MAY HAVE THIS AS LONG-TERM AIM.

4. WE DO NOT SHARE LABOUISSSE'S COMMENT (REF B) THAT IOG IS "MORIBUND". THIS COMMENT MAY IN FACT BE A REFLECTION OF UNICEF STAFF'S RESENTMENT THAT NEARLY ALL IOG'S PROGRAMS ARE CARRIED OUT IN GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PORTIONS OF CAMBODIA, SVN, AND LAOS, AND THAT IOG CONTACTS WITH DRV/PGR/GRUNK HAVE BEEN MINIMAL. ALTHOUGH USG SUGGESTED TO UNICEF THAT IOG MIGHT ACT AS INTERMEDIARY FOR UNICEF'S PROGRAMS IN COMMUNIST-HELD AREAS, AS YOU KNOW UNICEF HAS NEVER
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ACCEPTED THIS AND VIRTUALLY FROM THE START HAS SOUGHT TO ESTABLISH IT OWN LINKS WITH COMMUNIST SIDE. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY LABOUISSSE WOULD DRAW UNTOWARD CONCLUSIONS FROM OUR FURTHER IOG GRANT -- ESPECIALLY SINCE, UNLIKE UNICEF, IOG HAS ACCEPTED OUR RESTRICTIONS AGAINST CHANNELING ANY OF OUR AID TO OR THROUGH THE COMMUNIST SIDE.

5. FINALLY, IT SEEMS TO US THAT IF WITHDRAWAL OF FUNDS FOR IOG WERE IN FACT THREATENED OR DONE IN A MANNER AIMED AT "SENDING A MESSAGE" TO THE ICRC, THIS COULD HAVE EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE RESULT FROM WHAT WE DESIRE. THERE IS ALMOST NO CHANCE THE WITHDRAWAL COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED

WITHOUT THE REASON BECOMING PUBLICLY KNOWN -- AND ONCE THAT HAPPENED, ICRC WOULD BE UNDER PUBLIC PRESSURE TO PROCEED WITH INVITATION TO PRG TO PROVE ITS "INDEPENDENCE" OF USG FUNDING. BACKLASH FROM THIS TYPE OF PUBLIC PRESSURE COULD EVEN GAIN VOTES FOR INVITATION TO PRG.

6. AS YOU KNOW, USG HAS CONTINUING CONCERN FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN INDOCHINA -- A CONCERN SHARED BY THE CONGRESS. WE ARE SATISFIED THAT IOG HAS DONE AND CAN CONTINUE TO DO AN EFFECTIVE JOB IN CONDUCTING A PART OF THESE PROGRAMS, AND WE WOULD CONSIDER IT INAPPROPRIATE TO TAKE ACTION AIMED AT DISRUPTING THIS FOR REASONS UNRELATED TO THE PROGRAMS THEMSELVES, AND ONLY INDIRECTLY RELATED TO THE ORGANIZATION BY WHICH THEY ARE ADMINISTERED. IOG OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN INFORMED OF THE FURTHER USG GRANT, AS HAVE MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS (SOME OF WHOM HAVE EXPRESSED PARTICULAR SUPPORT FOR IOG), WHICH WOULD MAKE IT ALL THE MORE DIFFICULT TO MOVE NOW TO WITHDRAW IT.

7. WE HAVE IN THE MEANWHILE PROCEEDED WITH APPROACHES TO A WIDE RANGE OF GOVERNMENTS (REF C) TO STIMULATE RESPONSES TO THE ICRC'S NOTE REJECTING AN INVITATION TO THE PRG. WE SHARE YOUR RESENTMENT AT THE NEED FOR THIS EXERCISE, BUT IT IS NOW LAUNCHED AND WE HOPE FOR POSITIVE RESULTS. PUBLIC RETRIBUTION AGAINST ICRC WILL MAKE FAVORABLE RESULT LESS LIKELY. PRESUMABLY THE OUTCOME WILL NOT BE FINALLY KNOWN UNTIL AFTER JULY 31. REGARDLESS OF THE OUTCOME, WE DO NOT FEEL WE WOULD BE JUSTIFIED IN WITHDRAWING THE NEW FUNDING
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FOR IOG.

8. A MORE DIFFICULT PROBLEM IS RAISED BY THE INCREASE IN THE USG ANNUAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE ICRC WHICH HAS JUST BEEN AUTHORIZED AND APPROVED BY THE CONGRESS. A NEW PERMANENT AUTHORIZATION OF \$500,000 PER ANNUM (UP FROM ITS PRESENT LEVEL OF \$50,000) WAS INITIATED BY THE CONGRESS AND WAS APPROVED AS PART OF THE 1974 SUPPLEMENTAL AUTHORIZATION (PL 93-312). ALSO AT CONGRESSIONAL INITIATIVE, \$250,000 WAS APPROPRIATED FOR THE ICRC IN THE FY 1974 SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION (PL 93-305). THE STATE DEPARTMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH REPORTED FAVORABLY ON THE INCREASED AUTHORIZATION AND APPROPRIATION, CITING AMONG OTHER CONSIDERATIONS THE ICRC'S EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF POW/MIA'S IN INDOCHINA AND IN THE MIDDLE EAST. IF THE \$250,000 IS TO BE OBLIGATED, THIS MUST BE DONE BY JUNE 30, 1974. DENIAL OF THIS CONTRIBUTION, OR REDUCTION TO THE \$50,000 AMOUNT CONTRIBUTED IN PREVIOUS YEARS, WOULD MORE SEVERELY HURT THE ICRC (WHICH FACES A LARGE DEFICIT THIS YEAR) THEN WOULD WITHDRAWAL OF OUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE IOG. ON THE OTHER HAND, SUCH DENIAL OR REDUCTION WOULD ALSO QUICKLY BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE AND WOULD MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR US

TO WIN POLL ON PRG INVITATION. THUS, WE BELIEVE BEST PRESENT COURSE, HOWEVER UNPALATABLE, IS TO PROCEED WITH OBLIGATION FOR THIS FISCAL YEAR.

9. IN OUR FORMAL NOTIFICATION TO ICRC OF THIS INCREASED CONTRIBUTION, WE PLAN TO INSTRUCT OUR MISSION IN GENEVA TO REMIND THE ICRC OF OUR INTENSE DISAGREEMENT WITH AND DISAPPROVAL OF THEIR PROCEDURE ON THE PRG INVITATION, MAKING CLEAR AGAIN THAT USG WILL HAVE TO CONSIDER WITHDRAWING FROM WEAPONS CONFERENCE IF PRG ATTENDS.

10. AFTER QUESTION OF PRG INVITATION IS DECIDED, WE SHALL REVIEW QUESTION OF FURTHER ANNUAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO ICRC. WHILE ICRC ACTION MAY HAVE BEEN TAKEN IN BELIEF THAT IT WOULD HELP ICRC BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE IN ITS HUMANITARIAN WORK IN SE ASIA, WE RECOGNIZE HOW MISCONCEIVED THAT BELIEF IS AND BELIEVE WE ARE ENTITLED TO SOME ASSURANCE AGAINST FURTHER IRRESPONSIBLE ERRORS OF JUDGMENT OF THIS MAGNITUDE.

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